**Homage to David Livingstone**

David Livingstone was born March 19, 1813, in Blantyre, Scotland. We shall celebrate his 205th birthday. A desire for education, but from a poor family, led him to work 14 hour days and go to school after work. He read all he could about philosophy and science. He entered into the modest medical training of the time. He was a committed Protestant which took him to a couple of faiths. Ultimately he became a Congregationalist in the employ of the London Missionary Society, founded by evangelical Anglicans, now the United Church of Christ Council for World Mission.

His curiosity about Africa made him ideal to become a medical missionary. It is well documented he had one confirmed convert who never gave up polygamy; but his work made that of the missionaries who followed him much easier. His early days in the bush were mixed with failures.

He was the champion in the cause of anti-slavery. He witnessed many of the atrocities associated with the trade. His efforts forced the British government to condemn slavery and to use its command of the seas to enforce a ban. He was convinced if the major rivers of Africa could be opened to international commerce, slavery would be much less profitable.

The explorations of central Africa involved finding the source of the Nile. The Zambezi and Congo were great rivers. What was not known was how they were interconnected IF they were interconnected and how they related to the Nile. Fate led Livingstone to explore the Zambezi, in effect making him its champion as the Nile’s source. That was not to prove true but his explorations of the Zambezi made him the first European to see what he called Victoria Falls in honor of his queen. He described it: “Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.” The Falls and other rapids meant the river, the longest east flowing in Africa, was only navigable for short stretches.

A born wanderer, he was the first to cross southern Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian oceans. This made him the first European to trek across the Kalahari desert. The large city of Blantyre in Malawi is named for his birthplace. The city of Livingstone in Zambia retains his name even after independence. Interestingly, he was born at a time when the spelling of names of people and places was very fluid. His name sometimes appears as Livingston, but he preferred Livingstone.

Stanley and Livingstone: Europe had not had word of Livingstone in quite some time. He was not lost though. He and locals knew he was in Ujiji on the shore of Lake Tanganyika when “found” in November, 1871. Dr. Livingstone, I presume: the phrase appears in the book Stanley wrote on his return from the Livingstone expedition. During his journeys, Stanley kept a very detailed diary. The page on meeting Livingstone has been torn out. Later historians have shown Stanley often wrote history as he thought it should have happened.

His family life was sad. He convinced his wife to follow him to Africa after a home visit. Within a couple of months, she died of malaria. They had 6 children. An infant died at 2 months; a son died in the American Civil War. He voiced the regret of not having spent enough time with his children.

Livingstone was in declining health when Stanley left him but he set out for another exploration of the lakes and rivers in the area. His last days were spent in Chitambo’s Village in Zambia. Dysentery and ulcerated feet caught up with him. The last entry in his diary is on May 1, 1873, the accepted date of his death. His servants, Chuma and Susi, who had served him over 15 years, removed his heart and buried it under a tree on which they carved May 4, 1873. His body was eviscerated, wrapped in cloth, and placed inside a hollow tree trunk which Chuma and Susi carried over 1000 miles to Bagamoyo, capital of German East Africa, a few miles north of Dar Es Salaam and across the channel from Zanzibar. A ship carried them and Livingstone to London. Chuma and Susi had an audience with the queen; Livingstone lay in state in the office of the Royal Geographical Society and then was given a heroes burial in Westminster Abbey.

A word about Central Africa: There are actually 2 of them, British and French. The British version lies south of The Congo and consists of Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The French version lies north of The Congo and consists of the Central African Republic (Republique Centrafricaine) and any other country the French feel like throwing in, probably Gabon and the French Congo.